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DEPARTMENT FOR SCA/INS AND PRM
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BANGKOK FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA WBERGER
KATHMANDU FOR USAID/DCHA/OFDA MROGERS AND POL SBERRY
USMISSION GENEVA FOR NKYLOH
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SUBJECT: Report Number One on Interagency Policy Committee (IPC)
Benchmarks for Sri Lanka

REF: A) Colombo 691 B) State 69689

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: This is the first of three monthly reports on the Government of Sri Lanka's progress in meeting benchmarks for as outlined in Ref (b).

CAMP MANAGEMENT AND ACCESS: Acute humanitarian needs are being met in internally displaced persons camps (IDP) camps, although all sectors are not up to Sphere standards. Camps have stabilized and efforts to decongest them are reducing population pressures and helping to close gaps. The Sri Lankan Army (SLA) has withdrawn to the external periphery of the camps where it provides perimeter security and controls access to the camps. Local police are visible in the camps but maintain a low-key presence. Despite public pronouncements by Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services Rishad Bathiudeen that the transition from military to civilian authority over day-to-day management of IDP camps had occurred, it is unclear whether the SLA will continue to exercise the authority granted previously as the Competent Authority (CA) or this authority will be transferred to the civilian Government Agent.

The GSL does not restrict the access of U.N. agencies, international non-governmental organizations (INGOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that are delivering donor-funded goods and services and/or carrying out relief activities in the IDP camps. However, due to the fact that there are no written procedures on access to the IDP camps and the tendency of zonal commanders to make their own decisions on the spot, access is at times inconsistent. Although the GSL has provided permission and access for donors and implementing partners to address some protection issues, access for protection monitoring remains a concern.

REGISTRATIONS, SURRENDEES AND RETURNS: As of July 14, the Government of Sri Lanka (GSL) had only registered 101,260 IDPs and has only issued 50,000 IDP cards. The Office of the President's National Data Center estimates that it will complete the IDP registration process by mid-September. The GSL had reunited 5,841 families within the IDP camps as of mid-July. The International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) has completed the registration of

9,186 surrendeers. The surrendeers have been separated from the general IDP population. A steering committee on reintegration, chaired by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, on July 30 approved a National Framework Proposal for Reintegration of Ex-Combatants into Civilian Life in Sri Lanka that had been under development since April. As of July 15, the U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF) had registered 455 former child combatants who are now living at a child-only rehabilitation center in Vavuniya. The GSL continues to define "no-risk" IDPs as only the elderly, people with learning disabilities and other vulnerable groups such as the handicapped and disabled. As of July 17, the GSL had released 5,852 "no-risk" persons from IDP camps into host families and elders' homes. The GSL has not released a voluntary returns strategy for the North, nor has it begun voluntary returns to areas of high priority.

DEMINEING: The GSL has not released a mine action strategy. However, the humanitarian community anticipates that the GSL will provide a strategic plan and/or make decisions on de-mining in Mannar, Jaffna, northern areas of Vavuniya and parts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu Districts by the end of July. Demining operations are underway in Jaffna District and in the Rice Bowl area of Mannar District which will support high priority IDP returns. The GSL has begun coordinating a strategic approach to demining with international and local demining organizations. A public information/signage campaign has not been launched to local communities in mined areas. END SUMMARY.

12. (SBU) ENSURING LIVABLE CONDITIONS IN IDP CAMPS

a. Benchmark: Acute humanitarian needs are met with dignity. Key areas are food, water/sanitation, health, shelter, and protection.

Status:

Acute humanitarian needs are being met, although all sectors are not up to Sphere's standards. Camps are stabilized and efforts to decongest them are helping to reduce population pressures and to close gaps.

-Water. Water bowsering (tankers) and bore holes provide approximately 3 million liters of potable water per day - an estimated 10 liters per IDP per day - to Manik Farm for drinking and cooking. International Sphere standards are three and six liters per IDP per day, respectively. In addition, the National Water Supply and Drainage Board and UNICEF pipeline from the Malwathu Oya River to zones 2 and 3 of Manik Farms provides up to 1.4 million liters of non-potable water a day for washing and bathing or 5 liters per IDP per day. The Sphere standard is six liters per day. Although the water system's capacity is sufficient to meet IDP needs, water distribution per block can be inequitable as IDPs who arrive at water points earlier in the day collect more water than IDPs arriving later in the day. In order to make water distribution more equitable, UNICEF has initiated a water awareness campaign on the proper use of water and Vavuniya Government Agent (GA) Mrs. P.S.M. Charles is establishing a water monitoring mechanism in each zone to track water use patterns. UNICEF believes that when IDPs feel more secure in the camp environment they will not feel a need to collect more water than needed and thus more water will be available for the camp population as a whole.

- Sanitation. As of July 18, the GSL, in collaboration with UNICEF, U.N. and NGO partners had built 9,743 latrines. Although the ratio of latrines per IDP averages 28 and is above Sphere standards of 20 latrines per IDP, limited space is available to build additional latrines in the overcrowded camps. The ongoing process to decongest Manik Farm, however, will reduce overcrowding and will, over time, increase the ratio of latrines to IDPs. As the GSL prepares new camp sites, the GSL and relief agencies are planning for and building latrines to accommodate new arrivals.

- Health. Although the GSL Ministry of Health (MOH) publicly proclaims that IDPs "are provided with round the clock medical facilities with doctors and nurses available on call," not enough doctors and nurses are available to staff the 17 primary health centers (PHCs), 21 UNICEF planned nutritional centers, and 4 referral hospitals located in Manik Farm. Currently only 17 of 21 planned PHCs and only 17 of 21 planned nutritional centers are

operational. The critical shortage of professional medical staff at the referral hospitals and PHCs results in IDPs receiving only sporadic, inadequate medical care. Despite the shortage of medical staff, the GSL declined an offer from the ICRC to establish a field hospital and did not allow French military doctors or staff from Medecins Sans Frontiers (MSF) to work inside the camps.

To date, the GSL MOH has not established an effective early warning disease surveillance system or a mechanism to monitor and report morbidity and mortality rates. In addition, data provided by the MOH on the prevalence of infectious diseases or medical conditions such as rates of malnutrition in children cannot be relied on. Without an effective surveillance system to monitor diseases, it is difficult to evaluate the effectiveness of disease prevention and control measures or to ascertain the overall state of health of the IDPs.

A rapid deterioration of conditions in the camps could occur if an adequate drainage system is not developed to draw water out of the camps during the upcoming rainy season that starts in October. Any flooding would most likely lead to a significant increase in water borne disease. Presently there are already cases of dysentery, hepatitis A, infectious diarrhea, typhoid, measles, chickenpox and meningitis/encephalitis in the camps.

- Shelter. Since the major influx of IDPs in April and May 2009,

the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has reported that UNHCR, NGOs, and the GSL have constructed approximately 22,000 emergency shelters and erected 21,000 tents with a goal of providing one living unit per family. Although the objective was difficult to obtain over the past two months due to overcrowding, camp decongestion is now allowing single families access to individual tents. As the GSL creates new sites in the coming months, most IDP families will be given their own tent or emergency shelter. However, the emergency shelters, which consist of a wood frame covered in plastic sheeting, were only intended to last for a three-month emergency period and are not holding up to the high temperatures, humidity, and wind. Thus, the humanitarian community is now facing the challenge of finding additional resources to maintain and repair the shelters so that they will afford adequate cover for the IDPs during the rainy season that begins in October.

- Protection. Although improvements have been made on protection issues over the past two months, access for protection monitoring remains a concern. UNHCR, however, has five protection officers who have been able to monitor protection risks and serve as IDP advocates with the GSL. The GSL has released 5,852 elderly and IDPs with learning disabilities from the camps. The GSL has also cleared the departure of an additional 9,000 IDPs. The GSL has also reunified more than 5,000 families within the camps. However, major protection issues remain, including freedom of movement; consideration of the host family option; systematic and transparent registration of IDPs; transparent screening and feedback to families on the location of family members separated; family reunification; right to information about family members, services and information about future developments; and open access to freely interact with IDPs to ensure their concerns and needs are considered.

b. Benchmark: The Sri Lankan Army is withdrawn to the external periphery of camps and local police provide law and order within camps.

Status:

- The Sri Lankan Army (SLA) has withdrawn to the external periphery of the camps where it provides perimeter security and controls access to the camps. Local police are visible in the camps but they maintain a low-key presence. The police have not established police stations, nor do they actively patrol the camps to maintain law and order.

- On June 28, IDPs in Zone 2 of Manik Farm organized a demonstration in response to new restrictions on IDP movement between zones 1, 2, and 3 imposed by the SLA. No one was injured during the incident, despite reports of stone throwing and shots fired in the air by the SLA to disperse the crowd. The SLA, not the police, entered Zone 2 to end the demonstration.

c. Benchmark: Civilian government agents are placed in charge of IDP camps.

Status:

- Despite public pronouncements by Minister of Resettlement and Disaster Relief Services Rishad Bathiudeen that the transition from military to civilian authority over day-to-day management of IDP camps had occurred, it is not clear whether the SLA will retain this authority, which had been granted to the previous Competent Authority, Major General G.A. Chandrasiri, or whether day-to-day management of the camps will be transferred to the Vavuniya Government Agent.

- Mrs. P.S.M. Charles, the Government Agent (GA) for Vavuniya District, has remained in the background since the CA position was established in April. The GA's district offices, however, are fully engaged in developing and coordinating the infrastructure necessary to support the camps, and have offices established in each of the zones in Manik Farm. It has been widely anticipated that the

day-to-day camp management activities will be handed over to the GA once the SLA fulfils security imperatives and finishes building the remaining camps.

- On April 24, 2009, Major General G. A. Chandrasiri was appointed the Competent Authority (under emergency law) and given responsibility for coordinating and implementing all assistance provided to IDPs. On July 12, he was appointed by President Rajapaksa as Governor of the Northern Province. The GSL has named a new Vanni Commander, Major General Kamal, who at a July 26 lunch for PRM Assistant Secretary Eric Schwartz at Manik Farms, introduced himself as the new CA. However, in a subsequent meeting with A/S Schwartz, Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa stated that a new CA will not be appointed and the Government Agent will take over responsibility for day to day management of the camps. Post will update developments in this area in the next benchmarks reporting cable at the end of August.

13. (SBU) ENSURING ACCESS TO INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS (IDP) CAMPS

a. Benchmark: If the GSL cannot provide adequate goods and services within the camps, the GSL facilitates the provision of donor-funded goods and services to meet humanitarian needs.

Status:

- The GSL does not restrict access of U.N. agencies, INGOs, and NGOs that are delivering donor-funded goods and services and/or carrying out relief activities in the IDP camps. However, due to the fact that there are no written procedures on access to the IDP camps, and the tendency of zonal commanders to make their own decisions on the spot, access is at times inconsistent.

b. Benchmark: The GSL provides reasonable permission and access for donors and implementing partners, such as the UNHCR, ICRC, and NGOs, to monitor distribution of donor-funded goods, programs, and services in camps.

Status:

-The GSL does not have a policy that restricts access by humanitarian agencies that deliver emergency relief commodities and other materials to the camps. In addition, the GSL provides reasonable access for donors and implementing partners, such as UNHCR and NGOs to monitor distribution of donor-funded goods and services in the camps. ICRC reports that their access to IDP camps in Trincomalee, Mannar and Vavuniya Districts has been restricted since early July and they are currently in discussions with the GSL about future access.

c. Benchmark: The GSL provides permission and access for international organizations and implementing partners to address protection issues.

Status:

- Although the GSL has provided permission and access for donors and implementing partners to address some protection issues, access for protection monitoring remains a concern. ICRC reports that their

access to IDP camps in Trincomalee, Mannar and Vavuniya Districts has been restricted since early July and they are currently in discussions with the GSL about future access.

UNHCR and NGOs, however, have been able to conduct 39 participatory assessments in the camps with women, men, boys, and girls of different ages to gain a better understanding of protection issues and to explore possible solutions with the GSL. UNHCR protection officers continue to monitor potential protection risks associated with camp overcrowding and are in close liaison with authorities at all levels. Protection issues raised include family separations, maintaining law and order, as well as reducing risks associated with sexual and gender based violence.

14. (SBU) FULLEST POSSIBLE REGISTRATION OF IDPs

a. Benchmark: The GSL completes a database of all IDPs and shares the database with the United Nations.

Status:

- From March 15 through July 14, the Office of the President's National Data Center registered 101,260 IDPs out of approximately 266,000 IDPs. The data center anticipates completing the IDP registration process by mid-September. The data base has not been shared with the U.N.

b. Benchmark: ID cards and other documents are issued to IDPs with safeguards to prevent corruption.

Status:

- As of July 14, the GSL had issued only 50,000 ID cards to IDPs.

- The Office of the President's National Data Center reported that approximately 50 percent of IDPs do not possess a National ID Card (NIC). The National Data Center is taking necessary measures to obtain the documentation required to reissue the NICs to IDPs.

c. Benchmark: All possible family reunifications take place.

Status:

- Family Reunifications: As of July 7, the GSL had reunited 5,841 families within the IDP camps.

15. (SBU) EFFECTIVE DISPOSITION OF COMBATANTS

a. Benchmark: Combatants are identified, disarmed, and separated from the general IDP population.

Status:

- The ICRC has completed registration of surrendees and has registered 9,186 individuals. The GSL has separated the detainees from the general IDP population and placed them in disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration centers, most of which are located in Vavuniya and in public buildings such as schools. In addition, since January 1, the GSL has arrested 2,361 former combatants and other suspected Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) supporters under the Emergency Regulations and the Prevention of Terrorism Act. The detainees are located in several facilities around the country, including in Colombo. The ICRC reports that they have not had access to the surrendees in Vavuniya since early July and they are currently in discussions with the GSL about future access.[c1]

b. Benchmark: A formal process of demobilization, in line with international commitments, is initiated.

Status:

- A steering committee on reintegration, chaired by the Ministry of Disaster Management and Human Rights, approved the National Framework Proposal for Reintegration of Ex-Combatants into Civilian Life in Sri Lanka on July 30. The Ministry of Justice has been given responsibility for rehabilitation and a new Commissioner General for Rehabilitation, Major General Daya Ratnayake, has been named. At the same time, the Ministry of Defense has requested the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to assist with preparation of facilities to serve as demobilization camps in Vavuniya and to begin profiling surrendees to identify counseling and training needs. IOM, with a grant from USAID, has already initiated this process in the Eastern Province. The process will be

guided by the framework, which defines legal and practical issues related to reintegration. It is anticipated that since the framework has been approved and profiling of former combatants is underway, an action plan will be drafted in collaboration with relevant ministries and international partners.

c. Benchmark: No new children are recruited and previous child soldiers are identified, separated, and put into a UN program.

Status:

No new children were recruited since the end of the war in May 2009.

As of July 15, UNICEF had registered 455 former child combatants, including 299 males and 156 females, in Vavuniya. The GSL had initially placed the children in six adult detention centers in Vavuniya. UNICEF worked with the GSL Commission General of Rehabilitation to establish a child-only center at the Poonthoddam Technology Center in Vavuniya. An additional 200 to 250 former child combatants remain in Manik Farms. These children must go through a legal process to obtain a transfer document before they can be separated from their family. (Note: The transfer document provides the date at which the child was transferred into custody. By Sri Lankan law, a child can only be held in custody for one year.

If a child does not have the necessary transfer document, the child could remain in custody for an undetermined period of time. End Note)

16. (SBU) RELEASE OF "NO-RISK" POPULATIONS

a. Benchmark: The GSL establishes criteria to define "no-risk" IDPs, in addition to the elderly and disabled.

Status:

- The GSL continues to define "no-risk" IDPs only as the elderly, people with learning disabilities, and other vulnerable groups such as the handicapped and disabled. The U.N. continues to advocate for the timely release of other persons with specific needs as well as for broadening the categories of people eligible for immediate release.

b. Benchmark: Release of "no-risk" IDPs to host families and communities continues at an acceptable pace (on track for 25%-50% by the end of calendar 2009).

Status:

- As of July 17, 2009 the GSL had released 5,852 persons from IDP camps into host families and elders' homes. The GSL has also approved the departure of an additional 9,000 IDPs.

17. (SBU) ESTABLISHING AN IDP RETURNS PROCESS

a. Benchmark: The GSL widely communicates a voluntary returns strategy for the North, including for IDPs.

Status:

- The GSL has not widely communicated a voluntary returns strategy for the north, including for IDPs. However, on July 27, Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa briefed U.N. heads of agencies on the GSL's IDP 180-Day Returns Plan. Rajapaksa reported that the GSL expects to return an estimated 40,000 IDPs to several areas of Jaffna, Mannar, and Vavuniya Districts within the month of August. The GoSL said that it plans to return 3,000 IDP families, or an estimated 15,000 IDPs, to 35 villages in Vavuniya District beginning August 7. In addition, the GSL expects to return an estimated 5,000 IDP families, or an estimated 25,000 IDPs, to Kilinochchi District beginning August 15. The Vavuniya Government Agent stated that it is likely that the GSL will return new IDPs (persons displaced during the recent fighting) as well as old IDPs (persons displaced in previous years) to Vavuniya District. The GSL has not asked the U.N. to provide any support to facilitate the returns. Post will continue to monitor progress toward these announced numbers and report in the next benchmarks cable at the end of August.

b. Benchmark: The GSL begins voluntary returns to areas of high priority.

Status:

- The GSL has not yet begun voluntary returns to areas of high

priority.

18. (SBU) CONDUCTING DEMINING ACTIVITIES:

- Charge d'Affaires met twice over the past month with Senior Presidential Advisor Basil Rajapaksa to discuss demining and the USG contribution. Charge informed Rajapaksa of the recent USD 6 million contribution from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Political and Military Affairs Office of Weapons Removal and Abatement (State/PMWRA) to international NGOs Danish Demining Group (DDG), Swiss Foundation for Mine Action (FSD), Halo Trust, and Mines Advisory Group (MAG). The contribution brings State/PMWRA total contribution to USD 6.6 million to date. The GSL requested post's suggestions for priority demining tasks to be undertaken with these resources, along with summary information describing the personnel and equipment to be financed, and this information was provided by letter response. The letter also suggested closer collaboration between the SLA and INGOs, as well as the formation of a working group to meet frequently and to monitor the work plans of the implementing partners, with a focus on results tied to the ability of IDPs to return home. The GSL has now established a bi-weekly working group with the INGOs and SLA and has responded favorably to Post's request for a U.S. representative to attend these meetings. Charge has also supplied Rajapaksa with a draft demining strategy map for the North, produced by USAID, reflecting the stated priorities for demining and overlain with existing minefield and other contamination data.

a. Benchmark: The GSL releases mine action strategy for Mannar and continues surveys for remaining areas in the North by July 15, 2009.

Status:

- The GSL has not released a mine action strategy. However, post anticipates that the GSL will provide a strategic plan and/or make decisions on demining in Mannar, Jaffna, northern areas of Vavuniya, and other parts of Kilinochchi and Mullaitivu Districts in August.

b. Benchmark: Demining begins in support of areas of high priority for IDP returns by August 15, 2009.

Status:

- Demining operations are underway in Jaffna District and the Rice Bowl of Mannar District which will support high- priority IDP returns.

c. Benchmark: The GSL coordinates with international and local demining organizations on surveys and mine-removal efforts.

Status:

- The GSL has begun coordinating a strategic approach to demining the North with donors, INGOs, the U.N. Development Program (UNDP), as well as the Sri Lankan Army and the GSL's Mine Action Center. By early August, post anticipates it will have a better idea of the strategic focus for demining, which is now under discussion.

d. Benchmark: A public information/signage campaign is launched to local communities in mined areas.

Status:

- A public information/signage campaign has not been launched in local communities.

MOORE

[c]I believe they lost access to them as of July 2 but will double check with icrc